

Desperation, Salvation and Response
2 Kings 6:24-7:18

Paul Schuster
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Good morning,

Paul and Michelle Schuster.

- Missionaries with One Mission Society
- Partnering with you for many years now.

Michelle and I live in Korea - Regional directors for Asia for One Mission Society. Oversee 23 countries in Asia.

- Our job is to support, encourage, help resource our missionaries and our national partners.

God is moving in Asia!

- 2025
 - 168,000 decisions for Christ
 - 1,434 new worshiping groups formed
 - 58,979 baptisms
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- Get monthly reports of miraculous healings in Isaac Thailand, a totally unreached area of the country where God is establishing his church.
 - In the country we used to work in, in the face of significant persecution, our national partner has seen 5,000 decisions last year.
 - In South Asia, in a muslim majority country, the church denomination that started with 23 churches in 1998 now has 4,700 churches.

- Exciting change is that we are partnering with our national churches in Asia in missions.
 - Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong are all being set up as countries that will send missionaries to our OMS fields. They have access to places we North Americans can't go, and a deep passion for God.

This is YOUR ministry.

Michelle and I want to thank you for your support and to let you know that, as an extension of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church, your support, prayers and encouragement of this work are having a significant impact in Asia!

As missionaries naturally going to share about missions, about sharing the gospel with others.

- Will do that through a story in the Old Testament.
 - Sometimes we think OT stories are interesting stories, but don't really apply to us directly.
 - But "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16,17
 - And all of scripture points to Christ, including the Old Testament.

With that in mind let us dive into the passage.

2 Kings 6:24 – 7:19

- Israel has split into the Northern and Southern kingdoms.
- Samaria is the capital of the northern kingdom.
- King is the son of Ahab, not a good king.
- Arameans are laying siege to Samaria.
- Too risky to attack a walled city, so lay siege- starve it into submission.

²⁴ Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. ²⁵ There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels.

- Donkey's head (unclean animal, worst part of the animal, basically no meat.) 80 shekels of silver.
- Cup of seeds (literally Doves Dung) -could be literal for use as fuel, or a local name for some poor-quality seed) – 5 shekels.
 - Value of a shekel – debatable, - basically a few days wages.
 - A donkey's head, over ½ years wages.
 - A cup of seed husks – 2 weeks wages.
 - Point is, a lot of money for something basically worthless.
 - The situation was desperate.
 - People willing to give whatever they had of value for some small pittance of hope from starvation.

The city looked strong and powerful, but it was filled with starvation and death.

- Many people are like Samaria.
 - On the outside they look great, but inside they are spiritually dead.
 - In Jesus day, it was the Pharisees, the religious elite.
 - "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean." Matthew 23:27
 - Looking good, presenting a good face to the world has become a modern-day obsession.
 - Remember being on a beach in Thailand. Stunning place.
 - Many weren't enjoying the beauty of God's creation, they are spending time getting the perfect selfie. Why?

- So that they can get some random people will give them a digital thumbs up!
- Some pittance of approval, of love, of acceptance.
- Their Instagram posts look great, but like a golden apple that is rotten at its core, inside many people's impressive looking digital walls many are dying of spiritual starvation!
 - No meaning to life, no joy, no peace, no hope, and fear of the future.
- And, like paying 6 months wages for a donkey's head—people are willing to do almost anything to gain some tiny sense of significance, or peace, or joy, or hope.
- People are spiritually starving all around us, and all around the world.
 - Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:21 that even church-goers can be like that.
 - All the right words, all the right actions, but no spirit-filled life inside.

²⁶ As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, "Help me, my lord the king!"

- Sounds familiar right? All around us people are crying out for help.
- Maybe they want to scream it, but because of the need to keep up appearances all they can manage is to quietly whisper, "help".

²⁷ The king replied, "If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the winepress?"

- Like the king, the leaders of this world have no answers.

Then he asked her, "What's the matter?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we'll eat my son.' So, we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him,' but she had hidden him."

- Cannibalism — It's clearly a desperate situation.

When the king heard the woman's words, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and they saw that, under his robes, he had sackcloth on his body. He said, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!"

- The King is at his wits end. Everything is falling apart around him.
- What does he do?
- He is so mad at God for what is happening that he plans to kill Elisha, prophet of God.
- So familiar! Just like the king, when things go wrong, we human beings tend blame God.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, "Don't you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it shut against him. Is not the sound of his master's footsteps behind him?" While he was still talking to them, the messenger came down to him. The king said, "This disaster is from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" Elisha replied, "Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the LORD says: About this time tomorrow, a seah (30 cups)(7 litres) of the finest flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley (60 cups) (14 litres) for a shekel at the gate of Samaria."

- Elisha knows how desperate the situation is, he has no food either! But he has God! And through Elisha, God is offering hope. Elisha is letting them know, in spite of how it looks, God is able, and God has a plan.

The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, "Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen? You will see it with your own eyes," answered Elisha, "but you will not eat any of it!"

- Have you ever felt like that? Like being saved from your situation is impossible?
 - o "My situation is so bad, even God could not fix this."
 - o We may not say it out loud, but in our minds, we limit God.
 - o "God can't save me. I'm too far gone. I've done too much bad stuff. God could never love someone like me."
 - o There may be people right around you that, deep inside feel that way about themselves. —That they are not worth saving, that they are a hopeless cause.
 - o Maybe deep down, today, you feel that way. If you do, hang on, the story is not over yet.

Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, "Why stay here until we die? ⁴ If we say, 'We'll go into the city'—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die."

- 4 lepers
 - o Even compared to the people in Samaria, these people were in the worst possible situation. Not even inside the city walls.
 - o Surrender themselves to their only hope.
- Sometimes, like them, we need to hit rock bottom before we are willing to let go of control of our lives and allow God to act.

At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and

a great army, so that they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" So, they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. ⁸ The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.

- To their amazement they found not death, but food - salvation.
- They were not only fed — had treasure that they saved for the future!
- God not only spared their lives, not only provided a crust of bread, God, in his lavish grace, gave them more than they could think or imagine.
- Those lepers – that is us!
 - o We have nothing to offer God, nothing to make us worthy. No way to save ourselves. Like dying lepers all, we have is our sin-diseased souls.
 - o Like the lepers, God has lavished salvation on us.
 - o 2 John 3:1 "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" Hallelujah!

Then they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace."

- They realized that the salvation they had found, this gift, was not something they could keep to themselves, they had found salvation and they needed to share it. (Notice – Gospel literally means "good news")
- Could be read as "This is the day of the gospel, and we are keeping it to ourselves."
- Friends, this speaks to us.

- If you know Jesus, (Not if you go to church, but if you KNOW Jesus) you have found the greatest treasure there is.
- What God is asking us is this:
 - Are we, like the lepers, just enjoying it for ourselves, getting together with other Christians congratulating ourselves on our good fortune, burying our treasure?
 - Or are we sharing that good news?

So, they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, "We went into the Aramean camp, and no one was there—not a sound of anyone—only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were."

" You know that donkeys head you spend 6 months salary for? There are whole donkeys tied up right there... for free... and bread... and gold... just saying."

The king was sceptical, but he went to check it out.

¹⁶Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So, a seah of the finest flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, as the LORD had said.

- God, miraculously, saved the city. Not because they deserved it, but because of His mercy.
- God has that same message today! Because God has done another miracle. He gave his son Jesus to pay for our sins and raised him from the dead!
 - "For God loved the WORLD, (that's you, your family, your annoying neighbour, the drunk homeless guy, the child in Bangladesh and the Russian soldier, all of humanity) so much, that he gave his only begotten son so that WHOEVER believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."
- That is why you support missionaries like ourselves, to share that good news with people who have no access to the gospel.

But it's a task not just for missionaries or pastors or "professional Christians".

All around the world, including here in St. Albert, right beside you, people are dying.

- Starving to death spiritually
- Willing to do almost anything for some sense of hope, or peace, or joy.
- God has provided it, abundantly, freely through Jesus Christ.
- You and I have found that salvation.
- And he is asking us not only to enjoy that love and that relationship with Him that we have found, but to share that with a dying world!

Let's Pray

- Heavenly Father, we recognize that, like the lepers outside the city gates, we have nothing to offer you.
- Lord Jesus, when we were spiritually dying, you offered us the miracle of salvation. When we were starving and had lost all hope, you lavished us with the greatest gift you could, the bread of life, you gave us yourself!
- Holy Spirit, show us how to share what we found. Cause us to announce it to those struggling all around us, letting them know that they don't need to hide their pain behind fancy looking walls, behind a pretty facade. That if they will open the gates of their hearts, they can come out find you!
- Lord, thank you for your love. Help us to live in it fully. And help us to share it with others! In Jesus precious, powerful name we pray. Amen.